

# **Progressive Tinnitus Management 2.0**



## **Living Better with Tinnitus Workbook**

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# Introduction

- Welcome to Progressive Tinnitus Management 2.0: Living Better with Tinnitus. The Progressive Tinnitus management (PTM) 2.0 Living Better with Tinnitus Workbook was adapted from Progressive Tinnitus Management How to Manage Your Tinnitus: A Step-by-Step Workbook, 3rd edition (Henry et al, 2010). This workbook was developed by VA and DoD clinicians as an update to the standardized, evidence-based Progressive Tinnitus Management curriculum (Henry et al., 2015).
- It was designed to be a companion to the PTM 2.0 Living Better with Tinnitus workshops and/or as a clinical support tool for clinicians providing tinnitus care. This workbook provides a holistic, patient-centered approach to improve quality of life with tinnitus. Emphasis is placed on what matters to the Veteran or Service member to motivate them to take action to improve quality of life with tinnitus.
- This workbook does not and cannot, provide individual medical advice. The information is not intended to be a substitute for individual medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment by a health care provider. Do not rely on this workbook in place of seeking professional medical advice.
- If you notice any significant change in hearing, tinnitus, or ear-related medical problems, you should contact your primary care provider, audiologist or ENT (Ear, Nose, Throat) physician, as appropriate.
- Please contact an audiologist if you have questions regarding the information contained in this workbook, or if you have questions about tinnitus, hearing loss, or hearing aids.
- If you are a Veteran seeking a claim for service-connected hearing loss or tinnitus, you should contact your VA Regional Office or local Veteran Service Organization (VSO) for information as to how to proceed.

# What Can This Workbook Help Me With?

- Living better with tinnitus is the focus of this workbook.
- Tinnitus, hearing problems, and sound tolerance problems sometimes occur together.
- There are also some strategies for hearing and sound tolerance problems. For more information, please ask your audiologist.



Notes

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The problems below are examples of common tinnitus problems.

This workbook contains coping strategies that can help with these kinds of problems.

### **Tinnitus**

- Tinnitus keeps me from sleeping.
- Tinnitus keeps me from concentrating on reading.
- Tinnitus keeps me from relaxing.
- I can't get my mind off of my tinnitus.

The problems below are examples of common hearing problems. This workbook contains strategies that can help with these problems. You can also check with your audiologist for help with hearing problems.

### **Hearing**

- I can't understand what others are saying in noisy or crowded places.
- I can't understand what people are saying on TV or in movies.
- I can't understand people with soft voices.
- I can't understand what is being said in group conversations.

For help with sound tolerance problems, read “What To Do When Everyday Sounds Are Too Loud” in the appendix of the workbook.

### **Sound Tolerance**

- Sounds are too loud or uncomfortable for me when they seem normal to others around me.\*

\*If sounds are too loud for you while wearing hearing aids, please tell your audiologist.

These examples are adapted from the Tinnitus and Hearing Survey (Henry et al., 2015).

Is there anything you want to be doing, but aren't doing because of your tinnitus?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

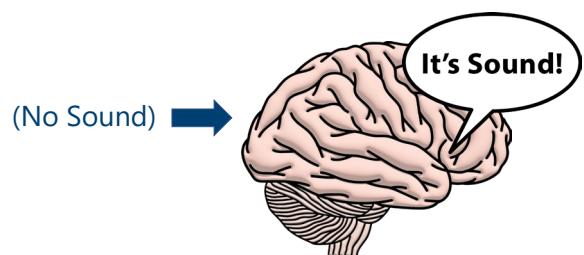
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# General Information about Tinnitus

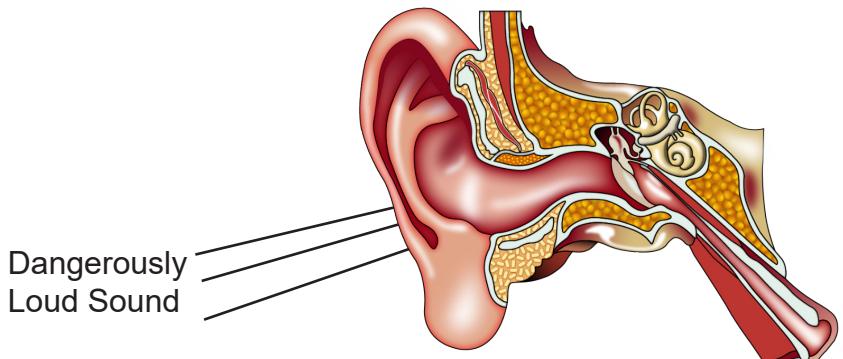
Tinnitus is a ringing, humming, buzzing, or other sound in your head or ears that does not have an outside source.

For it to be considered tinnitus, the sound has to last at least five minutes and happen at least once a week.



## Risk Factors for Tinnitus

- Exposure to dangerously loud sound
- Medications that are toxic to the ears
- Medical conditions of the ears
- Injuries to the head and neck
- Certain medical conditions
- Stress and lifestyle factors
- Jaw problems
- Hearing loss
- Ear wax
- Aging



## Tinnitus Research

At this time, researchers have not determined the cause(s) of tinnitus and cannot explain:

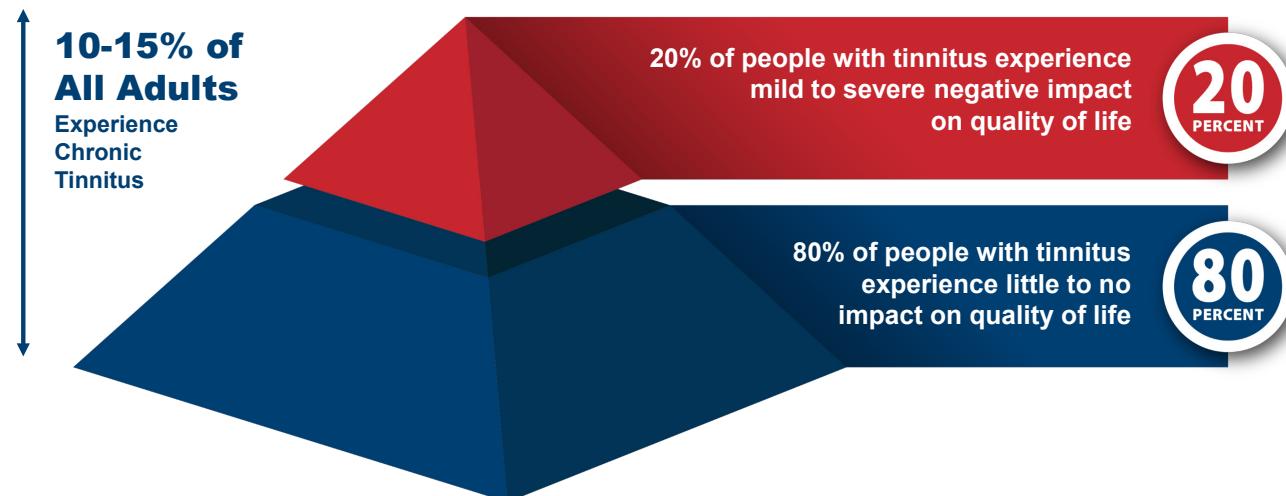
- Why some people develop tinnitus and others who share the same risk factors do not develop it
- Why tinnitus is constant for some, but intermittent for others
- Why tinnitus is bothersome to some, but not to others
- Why tinnitus is perceived as many different sounds such as ringing, buzzing, humming, or combinations of sounds

## Tinnitus is NOT the Same for Everyone

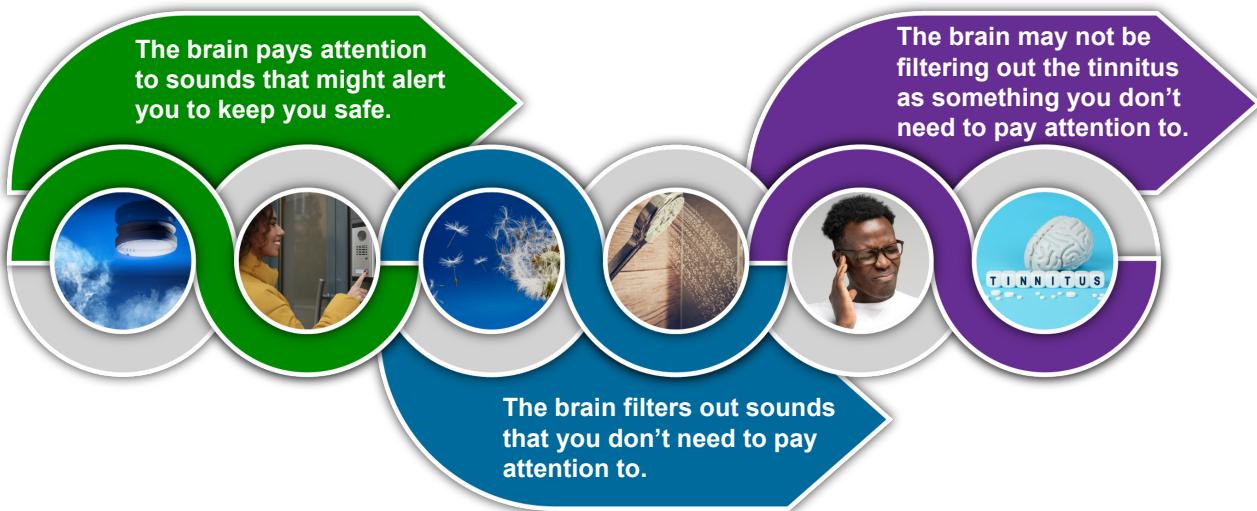
- There is variability in:
  - What it sounds like
  - How often it is noticed
  - How it impacts your daily life

## How Common is Tinnitus?

- You are NOT alone. Tinnitus is VERY common!
- 30-50 million American adults have chronic tinnitus (10-15% of the adult general population)
- People with normal hearing can also have tinnitus
- People of ALL ages can have tinnitus, even children



## Why are some people bothered by tinnitus?



### Facts About Tinnitus

- There is no cure yet for tinnitus
- No way to silence tinnitus or to make it quieter
- Scientists are looking for a cure, but it has been challenging
- No research evidence shows that vitamins, supplements, medications or devices do any more than a sugar pill
- Beware of anyone telling you they can cure or quiet your tinnitus

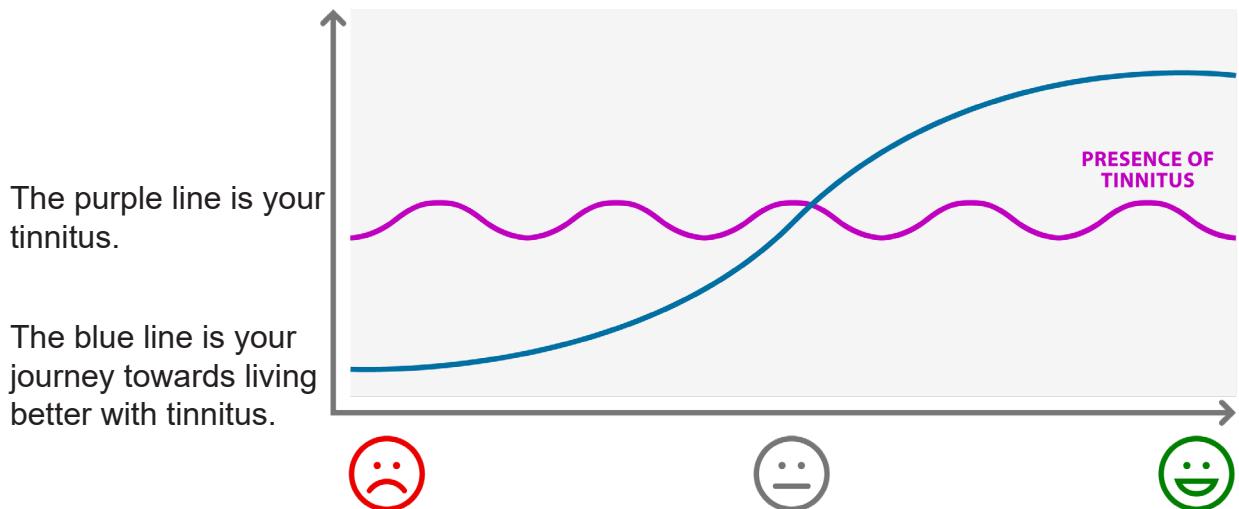
### You CAN Feel Better Living With Tinnitus

- There is hope!
- It is possible to live better with tinnitus.
- We will explore coping strategies to help you.

## What Does “Living Better with Tinnitus” Mean?

We can't cure tinnitus, but...

We can learn to live better with tinnitus!



### Living Better with Tinnitus: Example



# What Can I do Now to Live Better with Tinnitus?

## Protect Your Ears From Dangerously Loud Sound

Dangerously loud sound is the most common risk factor for tinnitus and hearing loss in adults.

- However, not everyone who is exposed to dangerously loud sound develops tinnitus.
- The louder the sound is, the faster it can damage your ears.



Firing a gun is so loud it can damage your hearing immediately



Using a chainsaw for two minutes can damage your hearing



Mowing the lawn with a gas push mower for two hours can damage your hearing



Driving in city traffic for eight hours can damage your hearing

**Extremely Loud**



**Very Loud**



**Loud**



## Earplugs are effective, but only when used properly.

Below is an example of how to properly wear foam earplugs:



- Earmuffs MUST fit snugly around the ears.
- Wearing glasses or a hood under earmuffs will cause them to be less effective.
- If the foam of the earmuffs becomes stiff, it's time to replace them.

### **IMPORTANT TO NOTE:**

Products labeled as noise-cancelling aren't necessarily hearing protection. Be sure that whatever you choose for hearing protection has a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR).



# Using Sound to Live Better with Tinnitus



## Sound can help you:

- Feel more comfortable
- Do the things you want to do (sleep, relax, concentrate on reading or computer work, etc.)
- Participate in things or activities that are important to you
- Feel better even if your tinnitus doesn't change

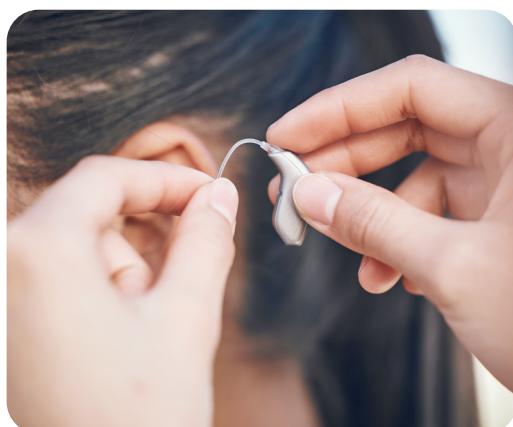


## Sound can't help you:

- Cover or hide your tinnitus at a safe and comfortable volume
- Make your tinnitus go away
- Change your tinnitus

## Hearing Aids

- Hearing aids can help with a hearing problem and with tinnitus.
- Most people say they notice their tinnitus less when they're wearing hearing aids.
- Hearing aids can allow you to hear and communicate more easily, which can:
  - Reduce listening effort and stress
  - Make it easier to have conversations
  - Improve participation in activities that you enjoy
  - Reduce isolation



# Living Better with Tinnitus Means Different Things to Different People

## Living Better Could Mean:

- Sleeping better
- More relaxed
- Less stressed
- Less irritable
- Easier to focus
- Improved relationships

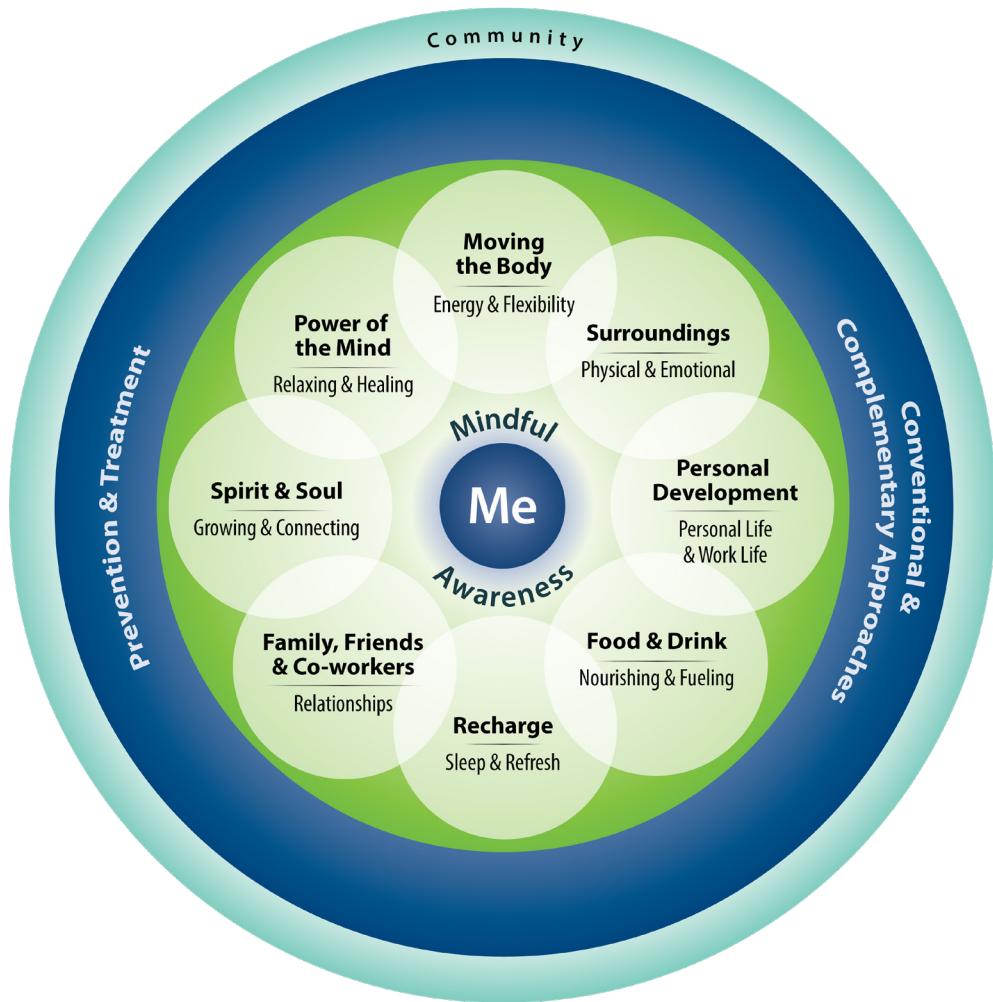
What would it mean for you to live better with tinnitus?

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## Improving Your Well-Being



## Anything That Improves Your Well-being Can Help You Live Better With Tinnitus

- Health and wellness classes
- Self-care
- Support groups for any condition
- Seeing a therapist to support your emotional well-being

## **Wellness and Living Better with Tinnitus**

### **Why are we talking about wellness in a tinnitus workshop?**

- When it comes to your tinnitus, your overall wellbeing matters.
- If you improve your overall wellbeing, it may be easier to:
  - Cope with your tinnitus
  - Do more of what you want to do
  - Live better with tinnitus
  - Be happier, healthier even if tinnitus does not change

### **What are Wellness Actions?**

- Wellness Actions are healthy activities that contribute to overall health and wellbeing.
- Wellness actions help move you toward better health and doing things that matter to you.
- Wellness Actions can help you live better and healthier even with tinnitus.

### **What are Some Examples of Wellness Actions?**

- Walking
- Dancing
- Practicing relaxation exercises
- Healthy eating
- Learning something new
- Spending time with family and friends
- Spending time outdoors

# Manage Chronic Conditions

- Managing chronic conditions is essential in supporting your health and well-being
- Sleep, PTSD, anxiety, chronic pain, etc. might impact life with tinnitus
  - These don't cause tinnitus, but they are conditions that may contribute to how much other things (like tinnitus) bother you

**Take a moment to write responses to the questions below:**

How are you doing managing your chronic conditions?

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What resources are you using to manage them?

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Do you need more resources?

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## In Conclusion

- Know and manage your risk factors
- Take action to improve your health
  - Simple daily actions can go a long way!
- Manage your expectations
  - There is no cure for tinnitus, but you can learn to live better with tinnitus

# Living Better with Tinnitus: Coping Skills

On the next page, you'll see the Client Oriented Scale of Improvement (COSI) for PTM 2.0. First, there's an example. Then, there's a blank worksheet for you to fill out.

The COSI for PTM 2.0 can be used:

- As a way to check if your quality of life has improved with the use of coping strategies
- To help you focus on what matters to you most
- To help decide if you need more care

The COSI for PTM 2.0 has been adapted with permission from the original NAL COSI developed by Dillon et al (1997).

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This is an example of how to complete the COSI for PTM 2.0.

## Client Oriented Scale of Improvement for Progressive Tinnitus Management (PTM) 2.0 Example

Adapted with permission from the National Acoustic Laboratory (NAL) COSI, Dillon et al. 1997.

**A) When does tinnitus affect your life? (Check all that apply)**

Please only choose situations **NOT** related to having trouble understanding what other people are saying.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Falling asleep	<input type="checkbox"/> Waking up in the morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Focusing on computer work	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focusing on reading	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relaxing
<input type="checkbox"/> Staying asleep	<input type="checkbox"/> Working quietly at my desk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focusing on a hobby	<input type="checkbox"/> Focusing on driving	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

**B) Area(s) of Focus: Which selected area(s) would you like to focus on during the PTM series? Please list them in order of importance.**

- Falling asleep
- Focusing on a hobby
- Focusing on reading
- Relaxing

**C) After completing the PTM series, how are you doing with your area(s) of focus?**

Worse	No Difference	Slightly Better	Better	Much Better
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**D) After completing the PTM series, I am able to engage in my area(s) of focus:**

Hardly Ever	Occasionally	Half of the Time	Much of the Time	Almost Always
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Use COSI for PTM 2.0 to identify your focus areas and see how helpful your coping skills have been.

## Client Oriented Scale of Improvement for Progressive Tinnitus Management (PTM) 2.0

Adapted with permission from the National Acoustic Laboratory (NAL) COSI, Dillon et al. 1997.

### A) When does tinnitus affect your life? (Check all that apply)

Please only choose situations **NOT** related to having trouble understanding what other people are saying.

- |   |   |  |  |                                      |
|---|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Falling asleep | <input type="checkbox"/> Waking up in the morning   | <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing on computer work | <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing on reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxing    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staying asleep | <input type="checkbox"/> Working quietly at my desk | <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing on a hobby       | <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing on driving | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

B) Area(s) of Focus: Which selected area(s) would you like to focus on during the PTM series? Please list them in order of importance.

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C) After completing the PTM series, how are you doing with your area(s) of focus?

Worse	No Difference	Slightly Better	Better	Much Better
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				

D) After completing the PTM series, I am able to engage in my area(s) of focus:

Hardly Ever	Occasionally	Half of the Time	Much of the Time	Almost Always
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
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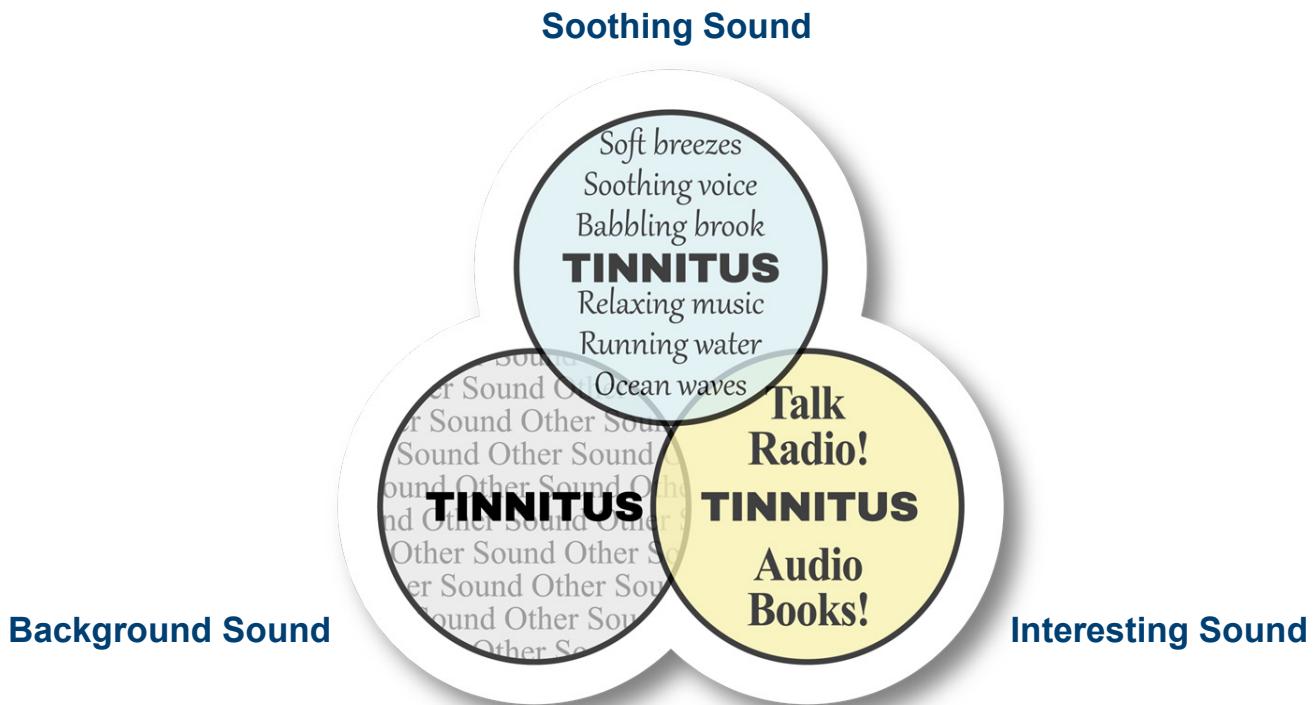
Dillon H, James A, Ginis J, Client Oriented Scale of Improvement (COSI) and its relationship to several other measures of benefit and satisfaction provided by hearing aids. J Am Acad Audiol, 1997 Feb; 8(1):27-43. PMID: 9046067

# Living Better with Tinnitus: Using Sound

You can use sound to:

- Feel more comfortable
- Help you do what you want to do

## Types of Sound



# Soothing Sound

## What is it?

- Sound that makes you feel better when you hear it

## How can it help?

- By helping you feel more calm, relaxed, and comfortable

## When can it help?

- Any time



## Soothing Sound: Examples

### Environmental Sound

- Ocean waves
- Wind chimes
- Insect Sounds
- **Any** environmental sound that is soothing to you

### Music

- Classical music
- New Age music
- Relaxation music
- Slow tempo music
- **Any** music that is soothing to you

### Speech

- Guided relaxation exercises (imagery, deep breathing, etc.)
- Guided meditation exercises
- **Any** speech that is soothing to you

**Any of these examples could be live or recorded.**

If you have trouble finding a soothing sound that works for you, see the practice worksheet in the appendix.

# Background Sound

## What is it?

- Any neutral sound

## How can it help?

- By filling in the quiet around you
- By making it easier to do what you want to do (sleep, read, etc.)

## When can it help?

- Any time



**TINNITUS**

## Background Sound: Examples

### Environmental Sound

- Fan noise
- Waterfall or fountain noise
- Traffic noise
- Radio static
- Fish tank noise
- **Any** environmental sound that is neutral or pleasant

### Music

- Classical music
- Guitar or piano music
- New Age music
- Music with lyrics in a foreign language
- “Elevator” music
- **Any** music that is neutral or pleasant

### Speech

- Recorded crowd noise
- Background television or radio
- **Any** speech that is not interesting to you

**Any of these examples could be live or recorded.**

If you have trouble finding a soothing sound that works for you, see the practice worksheet on in the appendix.

# Interesting Sound

## What is it?

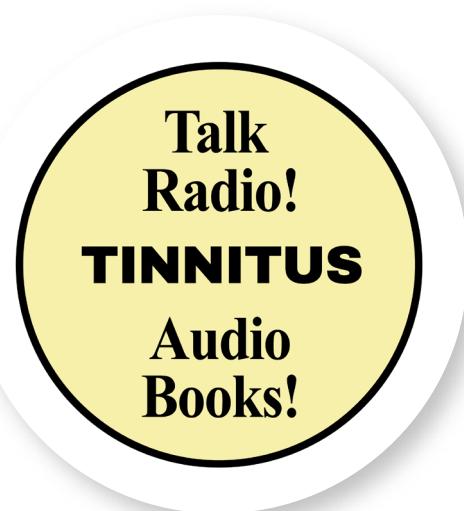
- Sound that keeps your attention
- Sound that involves active listening

## How can it help?

- By helping you shift your attention toward something interesting, something you enjoy, something meaningful

## When can it help?

- When you do not need to concentrate on something else
- When you want to relax or sleep



## Interesting Sound: Examples

### Environmental Sound

- Whale sounds
- Bird calls
- Forest sounds at night
- **Any** environmental sound that is interesting to you

### Music

- Song lyrics
- Various instruments
- Live musical performance
- **Any** music that is interesting to you

### Speech

- A friend's voice
- Talk radio
- Audiobook
- Podcast
- **Any** speech that is interesting to you

**Any of these examples could be live or recorded.**

If you have trouble finding a soothing sound that works for you, see the practice worksheet in the appendix.

This is an example of how to complete the Living Better with Tinnitus: Sound Plan Worksheet using Soothing, Background, and Interesting sounds discussed previously.

## Sound Plan Worksheet

### Living Better with Tinnitus: Sound Plan Worksheet Example

- One situation I want to focus on: *Falling asleep*

<p><b>2. Check the type(s) of sound that you will try</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Soothing sound</p>  <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Background sound</p>  <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interesting sound</p> 	<p><b>3. Write down the sounds that you will try. Be specific!</b> Experiment with different sounds.</p> <p><b>4. Write down the devices that you will use. Be mindful of the volume that you will use.</b></p>	<p><b>5. Use your sound plan until our next session. How helpful was each sound?</b></p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">Not at all</td> <td style="width: 25%;">A little</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Moderately</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Very Much</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">Extremely</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table> <p><b>6. Reflections.</b> What did you notice?</p> <p><i>The pattern of the waves on the shore helped lull me to sleep</i></p> <p><i>I used it during the day and didn't notice my tinnitus as often</i></p> <p><i>Helps most nights</i></p> <p><i>Too interesting</i></p> <p><i>Made me drowsy</i></p>	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very Much	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Extremely				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																							

This is the form you will use to develop your plan for using sound to live better with tinnitus.

# **Sound Plan Worksheet**

## **Living Better with Tinnitus: Sound Plan Worksheet**

- ## 1. One situation I want to focus on:

## 2. Check the type(s) of sound that you will try



## Background sound



Interesting sound



3. Write down the sounds that you will try. Be specific! Experiment with different sounds.

**4. Write down the devices that you will use. Be mindful of the volume that you will use.**

**5. Use your sound plan until our next session.** How helpful was each sound?

## 6. Reflections.

What did you notice?

# **Living Better with Tinnitus: Pleasant Activities**

Pleasant Activities help you live better with tinnitus.

## **What are Pleasant Activities?**

- Activities you enjoy
- Activities you like to do but do not have to do
- Activities that are fully engaging
- Activities where you are “in the zone”
- Activities that energize you

## **How Do Pleasant Activities Help?**

- Can lead to positive actions, thoughts and feelings
- Have pleasant and healthy distractions
- Help you feel better overall
- Help reduce stress
- Have healthy contact with other people
- Improve enjoyment of life with tinnitus
- Improve sense that life is well lived

## **Why Plan Pleasant Activities in Advance?**

- Sometimes we forget to make time for ourselves
- We are more likely to do them if they are planned
- “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail”

## **How to Plan Pleasant Activities?**

**Step 1:** Make a list of pleasant activities

**Step 2:** Schedule pleasant activities

**Step 3:** Do and track the pleasant activities you did

## **Step 1: Make a List of Pleasant Activities**

- Simplify – look for simple enjoyable activities
  - That don't need a lot of preparation or money
  - That are within your current budget and abilities
- Don't select activities that are unhealthy or that have a risk of misuse
  - NOT drinking alcohol or using drugs, excess television or screen time, sleeping, or eating

Use this worksheet to brainstorm and generate ideas. These ideas can be used to fill out the “Living Better with Tinnitus Schedule”.

### **Pleasant Activities Brainstorming Exercise**

Type of Activity	Example Activity	Activity
Social	<i>Dinner with Friends</i>	
Recreational	<i>Taking dance lessons</i>	
Sporting	<i>Playing golf</i>	
Creative	<i>Writing poetry</i>	
Educational	<i>Taking a history class</i>	
Solitary	<i>A walk in the woods</i>	
Artistic	<i>Painting</i>	
Pampering	<i>Getting a massage</i>	
Musical	<i>Playing the piano</i>	
Interest-Oriented	<i>Collecting old cameras</i>	
Travel	<i>Going to Hawaii</i>	
Food	<i>Baking bread</i>	

## **Step 2: Schedule Pleasant Activities**

- Scheduling pleasant activities makes it more likely that you will actually do them
- Schedule at least one pleasant activity to do over the next week
- Choose activities that you are confident you can do
- It can be the same activity every day or you can choose more than one activity

This shows an example of a schedule with pleasant activities and relaxation exercises.. You can also add wellness actions and relaxation exercises to the schedule. You don't have to fill in every space on the schedule.

### Living Better with Tinnitus Schedule: Example of Pleasant Activities

Day	Time	Activity	Did I do this activity?	Why or Why Not?
Day 1 <i>Tuesday</i>	AM	<i>Go for a walk with a friend</i>	Yes	<i>I enjoy spending time with my friend</i>
	PM			
Day 2 <i>Wednesday</i>	AM			
	PM			
Day 3 <i>Thursday</i>	AM			
	PM			
Day 4 <i>Friday</i>	AM	<i>Crossword puzzle</i>	Yes	<i>I like to challenge my brain</i>
	PM			
Day 5 <i>Saturday</i>	AM			
	PM			
Day 6 <i>Sunday</i>	AM	<i>Listen to an audiobook on a walk</i>	No	<i>My phone wasn't charged</i>
	PM			
Day 7 <i>Monday</i>	AM			
	PM			

Use this schedule to add at least one pleasant activity or wellness action. You don't have to fill in every space on the schedule. Even adding one new activity is a step in a new direction. Be sure to only schedule what you can realistically do. This is a chance to see if a new coping strategy and/or relaxation exercise works well for you.

### Living Better with Tinnitus Schedule

Day	Time	Activity	Did I do this activity?	Why or Why Not?
Day 1 _____	AM			
	PM			
Day 2 _____	AM			
	PM			
Day 3 _____	AM			
	PM			
Day 4 _____	AM			
	PM			
Day 5 _____	AM			
	PM			
Day 6 _____	AM			
	PM			
Day 7 _____	AM			
	PM			

# Living Better with Tinnitus: Relaxation Exercises

Relaxation exercises help you live better with tinnitus.

## Why do they help?

- They help you take a break from stress
- They help you relax even with tinnitus
- They help you think more clearly
- They help you do the things you want to do (sleep, relax, enjoy activities, work, etc.)
- They build skills that will help you feel better over time even though the tinnitus is still there

<i>breathe</i>	<b>How do they help?</b>
<b>Relax</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By slowing down your body</li><li>• They slow down your breath and heart rate</li><li>• By helping you feel more relaxed and comfortable</li><li>• By relieving tension and stress</li></ul>
<i>imagine</i>	

## When should I use them?

- Any time you feel stressed or tense
- Also practice when you are not stressed
  - You can get better at these skills so they'll help you when you need them the most.
  - Practicing can help find out which of these relaxation exercises works best for you.

## How to Prepare Before a Relaxation Exercise

- Find a place where you won't be disturbed
- Tell others you need privacy
- Loosen tight clothing or change into comfortable clothes
- If it helps, turn on soothing sound or soft music
- Find a comfortable sitting position. Put your feet flat on the floor or propped up. Place your hands in your lap or on chair arms.



## Relaxation Log: Example

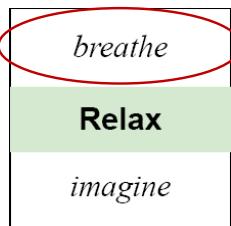
This is an example of what a completed log might look like after practicing a few relaxation exercises.

Living Better with Tinnitus: Relaxation Log					
Date	Time of Day	Minutes Practice		Relaxation Rating	
		Deep Breathing	Imagery	0 Not Relaxed	10 Completely Relaxed
Feb 5	9:30 am	5 mins	0	1	3
Feb 6	9:00 am	0	8 mins	2	4
Feb 8	9:30 pm	12 mins	10 mins	2	7

# Relaxation Log

Use this log to track your relaxation exercises. Even adding one is movement in a new direction.

# Relaxation Exercise #1: Deep Breathing



- Step 1:** Follow the “How To Prepare” instructions discussed on page 29
- Step 2:** Put one hand on your stomach and one on your chest. Notice which hand moves. Move your stomach hand more for a deeper breath.
- Step 3:** Close your eyes or focus on a thing in the room.
- Step 4:** Breathe through your nose for 3 seconds, counting your head “one-two-three.”
- Step 5:** Hold that breath for 2 seconds (count “one-two”) & release the breath for 3 seconds (count “one-two-three”).
- Step 6:** Repeat steps 4 and 5 for five to ten minutes.
- Step 7:** When you are done, think about where you are, wiggle your hands and feet, and open your eyes.



# What is Imagery?

breathe
Relax
imagine

- Imagery is imagining you are some place calming and peaceful
- Some people call this their “happy” place
- Choose a place that feels safe to you
- Think about each of your 5 senses to get a good picture of the place:

**Sight, Smell, Sound, Touch, and Taste**

## Relaxation Exercise #2: Imagery

- Step 1:** Prepare as you would for any relaxation exercise
- Step 2:** Take several deep breaths and shift toward the peaceful image you chose.
- Step 3:** As you focus on the peaceful place
- **Imagine** a path you travel on as you journey through your place.
  - **Imagine** what you hear, smell and taste.
  - **Imagine** reaching out and touching things around you.
  - As you **Imagine** your relaxing place, move deeper and deeper into the image. You should feel calm and peaceful there.
  - **Notice** how your body feels, you will want to return to this feeling next time you do this exercise.



This shows an example of a schedule with pleasant activities and relaxation exercises. You can also add wellness actions to the schedule. You don't have to fill in every space on the schedule.

## Living Better with Tinnitus Schedule: Example of Pleasant Activities and Relaxation Exercises

Day	Time	Activity	Did I do this activity?	Why or Why Not?
Day 1 <i>Tuesday</i>	AM	<i>Go for a walk with a friend</i>	Yes	<i>I enjoy spending time with my friend</i>
	PM			
Day 2 <i>Wednesday</i>	AM	<i>Practice deep breathing</i>	Yes	<i>It helps me relax</i>
	PM	<i>Practice imagery</i>	No	<i>I forgot</i>
Day 3 <i>Thursday</i>	AM			
	PM			
Day 4 <i>Friday</i>	AM	<i>Crossword puzzle</i>	Yes	<i>I like to challenge my brain</i>
	PM	<i>Breathing and imagery for sleep</i>	Yes	<i>It helps me fall asleep</i>
Day 5 <i>Saturday</i>	AM			
	PM			
Day 6 <i>Sunday</i>	AM	<i>Listen to an audiobook on a walk</i>	No	<i>My phone wasn't charged</i>
	PM			
Day 7 <i>Monday</i>	AM			
	PM			

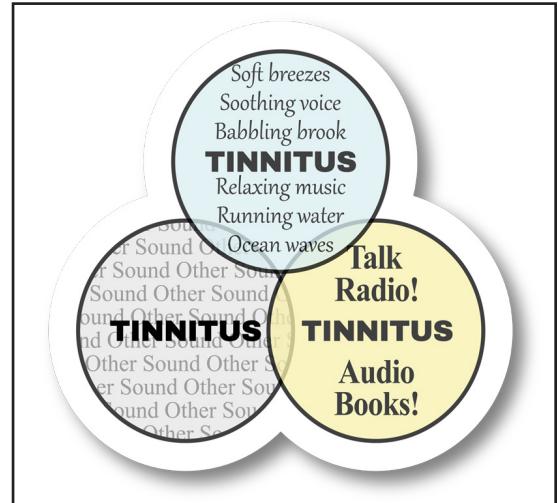
Use this schedule to add at least one relaxation exercise. You don't have to fill in every space on the schedule. Even adding only one relaxation exercise is a step in the right direction. Be sure to only schedule what you can realistically do. This is a chance to see if a new coping strategy works well for you.

## Living Better with Tinnitus Schedule

Day	Time	Activity	Did I do this activity?	Why or Why Not?
Day 1	AM			
	PM			
Day 2	AM			
	PM			
Day 3	AM			
	PM			
Day 4	AM			
	PM			
Day 5	AM			
	PM			
Day 6	AM			
	PM			
Day 7	AM			
	PM			

## Things to Remember

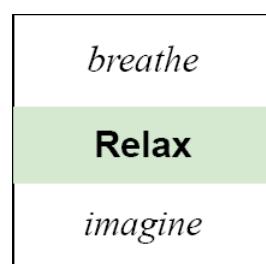
- You might not notice relaxation exercises helping you right away—that doesn't mean they're not helping you. Keep practicing!



- Increasing pleasant activities over weeks or months can improve your quality of life



- Improving your overall health and wellbeing through health and wellness goals can help you live for what matters



# Living Better with Tinnitus: Communication Strategies



## **Using Good Communication Strategies- Telephones**

**What can you do if you are struggling to hear on the phone?**

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- Stream cell phone to your hearing aids
- Hold phone over hearing aid not your ear canal
- Ask speaker to slow down
- Repeat back numbers / names
- Captioned phone
- Turn off / turn down competing noise (TV, radio, etc.)

## **Using Good Communication Strategies- Lectures, Movies, Religious Services, Courthouses, Performing Arts Theaters**

**What can you do to hear and understand as much as possible when you are in an audience?**

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- Sit up front and in the middle
- Try listening devices, if available
- Read program ahead of time
- Ask if the facility has a loop system (if it does, your audiologist may be able to help you access it)

# Using Good Communication Strategies- Restaurants and Dining Rooms

What can you do to hear better in a noisy or crowded restaurant or dining room?

## SUGGESTIONS:

- Soft surfaces, lighting, spacing between tables
- Less busy days or times
- Smaller groups
- Preview menu
- Sit away from high traffic areas
- Booth vs. table
- Ask to have music turned down or to be moved away



Wonder if hearing aids might help you? Have hearing aids, but you can't wear them, or they aren't helping?

Contact an audiologist

Here's an example of what a finished communication strategies worksheet might look like.

# Communication Worksheet: Example

## Why do you want to communicate better?

*I want to be able to keep in touch with my family and friends who are important to me.*

---

*I want to be able to perform my job without being afraid I will make a mistake because of my hearing loss*

---

## If you were able to communicate better, what would that bring into your life?

*It would bring less stress because I wouldn't be working so hard to hear and dreading certain situations.*

---

*I would be able to enjoy socializing with my friends instead of avoiding them because of my hearing problems.*

---

## List strategies to improve communication that you will try in the next week:

*I will wear my hearing aids consistently and let people know how much it helps if they face me when they are speaking.*

---

*I will also remind family members to come into the same room with me when they want to have a conversation.*

---

*I will reduce competing noise, whenever possible.*

---

Use this worksheet to plan how you will communicate. You might want to work on it with someone important to you.

# Communication Worksheet

**Why do you want to communicate better?**

---

---

**If you were able to communicate better, what would that bring into your life?**

---

---

**List strategies to improve communication that you will try in the next week:**

---

---

---

# Living Better with Tinnitus: Balancing Thoughts and Feelings



# Living Better with Tinnitus: Balancing Thoughts and Feelings

- Looking closely at our thoughts and making them more balanced can lower stress.
- With practice, you can learn to choose thoughts that:
  - Guide you in the direction you want to go.
  - Help you let go of thoughts that hold you back from moving forward.

## Thoughts Affect Feelings

- What you think affects how you feel.
- **Example:** Imagine your friend is late coming to your house for dinner.
- Sometimes your feelings come from your thoughts about the event, not the event itself.

**Think about: What kinds of thoughts do I want guiding my life?**

## Step-By-Step Guide: Balancing Thoughts and Feelings

Use these instructions for the worksheets on page 44-47.

### **How to use every day:**

- Work through the Balancing Thoughts Exercise worksheet.
- Sometimes you can *feel* better by changing the way you *think*.
- When you notice unpleasant feelings or things aren't going well, try the Balancing Thoughts Exercise. It might help you feel better.

## Step-By-Step Guide: Balancing Thoughts

### **Step 1: Event**

Identify what was going on when you started feeling bad. What happened?

### **Step 2: Thoughts**

What was the first thought that came into your mind just before you started feeling bad or upset? You may have had many thoughts just before you started feeling bad. If you had more than one thought, pick the one that made you feel the worst.

### **Step 3: Unpleasant Feeling or Undesired Outcome**

Write down any bad or upsetting feelings you had or any undesired outcome.

### **Step 4: Evidence For**

Examine the thought you described in Step 2. Our thoughts often have some truth to them, but it may not be the full truth. Write down evidence that the thought in Step 2 is true for each of your situations.

### **Step 5: Evidence Against**

Identify evidence that your thought from Step 2 may not be true. You may be able to identify evidence against this thought using Unhelpful Thoughts from the list. You can have more than one Unhelpful Thought in a single thought. Write this evidence in the “Evidence Against” box.

### **Step 6: New Helpful Thought**

Write down a new more helpful thought about the event. New thoughts should be (1) *brief*, (2) *easy to remember*, (3) *true to you*, (4) *apply to your life*, and (5) *helpful*. This step requires a lot of practice to feel more natural. Sometimes it helps to say statements that apply to many things.

### **Step 7: Pleasant Feeling**

As you practice, pay attention to how you feel when you have a new, helpful thought.

### **Step 8: Picture Yourself in the Future**

Look at the Unhelpful Thought from Step 2. Think of a time in the future when you might have that thought again. Look at the Helpful Thought from Step 6. Picture yourself in the future having the Helpful Thought from Step 6 instead.

This shows how to balance your thoughts. Use this worksheet to help you balance your thoughts about tinnitus.

## Step-By-Step Guide: Balancing Thoughts Worksheet

Steps	Example	Your Situation
<b>Step 1: Event</b>	<i>My tinnitus isn't getting better</i>	
<b>Step 2: Thoughts</b>	<i>"Why can't anyone help me?"</i>	
<b>Step 3: Unpleasant Feeling or Undesired Outcome</b>	<i>Feeling helpless, frustrated, angry, and screamed at my kids</i>	
<b>Step 4: Evidence For</b>	<i>I've been to so many doctors and still have tinnitus</i>	
<b>Step 5: Evidence Against</b>	<i>I fell asleep easily last night. Maybe using sound is helping me even if my tinnitus is not getting any quieter</i>	
<b>Step 6: New Helpful Thought</b>	<i>"I probably can't make my tinnitus quieter. Even so, I can find ways to feel better even if the tinnitus doesn't change"</i>	
<b>Step 7: Pleasant Feeling or Desired Outcome when you have the new thought</b>	<i>Feeling happier, a little more hopeful, spent more time with my child and learned something new.</i>	
<b>Step 8: Picture yourself in the future. Think of an event in the future when you might have the unhelpful thoughts again. Picture yourself thinking the helpful thought instead.</b>		

## Balancing Your Thoughts and Feelings: Examples

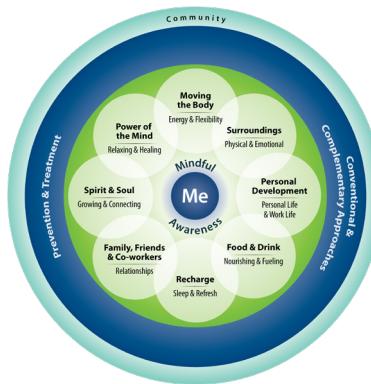
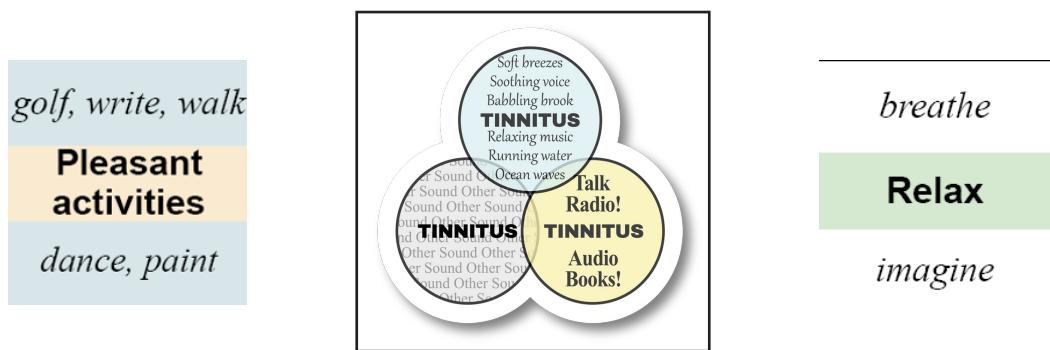
Unhelpful Thought Pattern	Examples of Unhelpful Tinnitus Thoughts	Corrected, more Helpful Thought
<b>All-or-nothing thinking:</b> Viewing only two categories, like black or white.	“If my tinnitus is loud when I wake up my whole day is ruined.”	“Even if my tinnitus annoys me, I can still have a good day.”
<b>Over-simplifying:</b> Viewing one bad event as an unchanging pattern.	“I can’t relax because of tinnitus.”	“Sometimes tinnitus stops me from relaxing, but other times I can relax.”
<b>Filtering out the positive:</b> Focusing on a negative detail while ignoring positive ones.	“I couldn’t enjoy my vacation because of my tinnitus.”	“Despite my tinnitus, I enjoyed seeing the Grand Canyon on vacation.”
<b>Jumping to conclusions:</b> Assuming you know what others think or expecting a bad outcome without facts.	“Since there is no cure for tinnitus there is nothing that can be done.”	“I tried using soothing sound last night and it was easier to fall asleep.”
<b>Underestimating:</b> Thinking things are less important than they are, like your success or others' faults.	“I must use a fan to fall asleep. I’ll never learn to deal with my tinnitus.”	“I’ve learned to sleep better with tinnitus. It may not go away, but I can keep finding ways to feel better.”
<b>Assuming the worst:</b> Believing something is much worse than it is, also known as “catastrophizing.”	“Tinnitus will ruin my life.”	“My tinnitus will probably always be there, but I can still do worthwhile things with my life”
<b>Emotional thoughts:</b> Believing your emotions reflect reality, as in “I feel it, so it must be true.”	“I feel all alone, so no one knows what I am going through.”	“There are people who understand my experience (i.e. other people who have tinnitus).”
<b>‘Should’ statements:</b> Rigid beliefs of how things/people should be, causing guilt/anger. Includes “must” & “ought.”	“I shouldn’t have to deal with tinnitus in the best years of my life.”	“Tinnitus isn’t what I expected when I retired, but I am finding ways to enjoy myself.”
<b>Labeling:</b> Attaching a bad label to yourself or others	“I can’t deal with my tinnitus so I’m a weak person.”	“Living with tinnitus is hard, but I can learn how to cope like anyone else.”

## Balancing Your Thoughts and Feelings

Steps	Example	Your Example
Step 1: Event	<i>My tinnitus isn't getting better</i>	
Step 2: Thoughts	<i>Why can't anyone help me?</i>	
Step 3: Unpleasant Feeling or Undesired Outcome	<i>Feeling helpless, frustrated, angry and screamed at my kids</i>	
Step 4: Evidence for	<i>I've been to so many doctors and still have tinnitus</i>	
Step 5: Evidence Against	<i>"I fell asleep easily last night. Sound might be helping, even if my tinnitus isn't quieter."</i>	
Step 6: New Helpful Thought	<i>"I probably can't make my tinnitus quieter. Even so, I can find ways to feel better even if the tinnitus doesn't change."</i>	
Step 7: Positive feeling or outcome with the new thought	<i>Feeling happier, a little more hopeful. Spending more time with my child learning something new</i>	
Step 8: Picture yourself in the future. Think of an event in the future when you might have the unhelpful thoughts again. Picture yourself thinking the helpful thought instead.		

## Practice at Home

- Using Sound
- Planning Pleasant Activities
- Relaxation Exercises
- Health and Wellness Skills
- Balancing Thoughts and Feelings



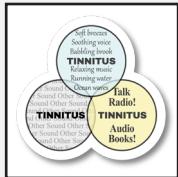
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Here's an example of what a finished Living Better with Tinnitus Favorites worksheet might look like. Add the skills that work for you to the Living Better with Tinnitus Favorites worksheet.

## Living Better with Tinnitus Favorites: EXAMPLE

Comments

### Using Sound



Sound 1 Sound machine with waves

Sound 2 Fan

Sound 3 Music

I will wear hearing aids

during the day to help me  
hear better.

### Pleasant Activities

*golf, write, walk*

**Pleasant activities**

*dance, paint*

Activity 1 Morning Walks

Activity 2 Crossword Puzzles

Activity 3 Breakfast with friends on Thursdays

I will schedule pleasant

activities to remind me to do  
them.

### Relaxation

*breathe*

**Relax**

*imagine*

Deep Breathing

Imagery

Other VA Mindfulness Coach App

I will make a habit of

practicing relaxation  
strategies

### Other helpful strategies:

PTSD support group and Whole Health insomnia group

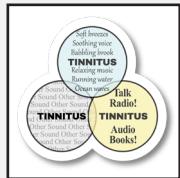
I will look for wellness  
opportunities

Use this worksheet to keep a list of your most helpful coping skills.

## Living Better with Tinnitus: Favorites

Comments

### Using Sound



- Sound 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Sound 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Sound 3 \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

### Pleasant Activities

*golf, write, walk*

**Pleasant activities**

*dance, paint*

- Activity 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Activity 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Activity 3 \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

### Relaxation

*breathe*

Deep Breathing

**Relax**

Imagery

*imagine*

Other \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

### Other helpful strategies:

---

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## **Appendix**

Tinnitus Resources

Tinnitus and Hearing Survey

What to Do When Everyday Sounds Are Too Loud (Not related to using hearing aids)

Soothing Sound Activity

Background Sound Activity

Interesting Sound Activity

References

Acknowledgements

## Tinnitus Resources

NCRAR:

<https://www.ncrar.research.va.gov/ClinicianResources/index.asp>

DOD website for Tinnitus:

<https://www.hearing.health.mil/Education/Tinnitus>

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders: <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov>

Mobile Apps:

<https://mobile.va.gov>

Whole Health Resources:

<https://www.va.gov/wholehealth>

Breathing, Meditation, Mindful Movement, & Guided Rest:

<https://www.veteransyogaproject.org/practice>

National Institutes of Health (NIH):

<https://clinicaltrials.gov>

Check out the iPhone or Android App Stores:

Nature Sounds, Relaxation, and Wellness Apps



# Tinnitus and Hearing Survey

## A. Tinnitus

Over the last week, tinnitus kept me from sleeping.

Over the last week, tinnitus kept me from concentrating on reading.

Over the last week, tinnitus kept me from relaxing.

Over the last week, I couldn't get my mind off of my tinnitus.

	No, not a problem	Yes, a small problem	Yes, a moderate problem	Yes, a big problem	Yes, a very big problem
--	-------------------	----------------------	-------------------------	--------------------	-------------------------

0      1      2      3      4

0      1      2      3      4

0      1      2      3      4

0      1      2      3      4

Grand Total

Total of each column

## B. Hearing

Over the last week, I couldn't understand what others were saying in noisy or crowded places.

Over the last week, I couldn't understand what people were saying on TV or in movies.

Over the last week, I couldn't understand people with soft voices.

Over the last week, I couldn't understand what was being said in group conversations.

0      1      2      3      4

0      1      2      3      4

0      1      2      3      4

0      1      2      3      4

Grand Total

Total of each column

## C. Sound Tolerance

Over the last week, sounds were too loud or uncomfortable for me when they seemed normal to others around me.\*

0      1      2      3      4

If you responded 1, 2, 3, or 4 to the statement above:

Please list two examples of sounds that are too loud or uncomfortable for you, but seem normal to others:

\*If sounds are too loud for you while wearing hearing aids, please tell your audiologist.

## Instructions for Using the Tinnitus and Hearing Survey

### Sections A and B

The four items in the **A (Tinnitus) subscale** describe common problems with tinnitus that are unrelated to hearing problems. The four items in the **B (Hearing) subscale** describe common hearing problems that would not be caused by tinnitus. Step-by-step instructions for using the THS to collaboratively determine if intervention for tinnitus is desirable and appropriate are provided below. **With the patient's filled-out THS in view:**

1. Explain that intervention for tinnitus can help with the problems in Section A
2. Explain that intervention for tinnitus would not help with any of the problems listed in Section B
3. Describe what would be required to engage in the tinnitus intervention that is offered (logistics, cost, etc.)
4. Be available to answer questions or concerns about the tinnitus intervention that is offered, or about tinnitus in general
5. Allow the patient to decide whether or not to engage in the intervention

Use of cut-off scores to determine candidacy for an intervention for tinnitus is strongly discouraged as it promotes decision making that does not take into account all of the factors in a patient's life. The most effective use of the THS is as a tool to quickly and efficiently separate hearing problems from tinnitus problems, which then allows the clinician to describe the available interventions relative to the specific problems the patient is experiencing. The patient can then decide if any of the interventions being offered are a good match for their lifestyle, and for problems they wish to address.

### Section C

Sound tolerance problems are often reported by patients with tinnitus. The two items in the C (Sound Tolerance) subscale can be used to assist the clinician in developing an initial impression regarding the existence and type of sound tolerance problem. **Item 1** is used to screen for the existence of a sound tolerance problem. Any answer other than zero indicates some level of difficulty with tolerating sound.

**Item 2** is intended to elicit examples from the patient (that the clinician will discuss with the patient) to: (1) ensure the patient really is experiencing a sound tolerance problem (and not something else); and (2) inform the clinician's opinion regarding the type of sound tolerance problem.

Examples for Item 2 that would suggest the patient may not have an abnormal reaction to sound include: (1) sounds that would be too loud for anyone (e.g., gunfire, nearby siren); (2) general annoyance to certain sounds that seem intrusive or that break concentration (e.g., background office noise, baby crying, dog barking, dentist drill, etc.); (3) complaints from hearing aid users who are only having trouble tolerating sounds that are commonly problematic for hearing aid users (e.g., silverware or dishes clanking, paper rustling).

After discussing the examples, if it appears the patient does have trouble tolerating sounds that most people can tolerate well, then the clinician will form an initial impression about whether the sound tolerance problem appears to be hyperacusis, misophonia, noise sensitivity, phonophobia, or some combination of these conditions. Use the definitions below to guide your impressions as you talk through the patient's examples.

**Hyperacusis = physical discomfort caused by sound at levels that are comfortable for most people.**

With hyperacusis, all sounds are uncomfortable once they reach a certain loudness level, which varies from person to person with hyperacusis. The source of the sound is irrelevant—when any sound reaches a certain level, it is uncomfortably loud. Hyperacusis is almost always a bilateral condition. There is a strong association between hyperacusis and tinnitus.

**Misophonia = emotional reactions to sound.** With misophonia, it is not the loudness of a sound that causes discomfort (as is the case with hyperacusis). Rather, it is an emotional reaction to the sound that causes it to be experienced as uncomfortable. It is common for a person with misophonia to find particular sounds to be uncomfortable at a relatively low level, but to find other sounds at the same level to be acceptable. Trigger sounds most typically involve those made by the mouth or nose, such as chewing, breathing, lip-smacking, crunching, sniffing, coughing, and swallowing. Other sounds people make can trigger reactions, such as

repeated clicking of a ballpoint pen, typing, and foot tapping. Trigger sounds can include any sound in the environment that causes emotional reactions.

**Noise sensitivity = general reactivity or discomfort (annoyance or feeling overwhelmed) due to a perceived noisy environment.** Like misophonia, noise sensitivity is not driven by the intensity level or perceived loudness of sounds in the environment. People with noise sensitivity are typically most comfortable in a quiet environment. Noise sensitivity is highly prevalent in people who have experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI). It is also associated with PTSD, depression, anxiety, and autism spectrum disorder.

**Phonophobia = fear that a sound may occur that will result in discomfort, pain, or anxiety, or that will exacerbate an existing auditory disorder.** Phonophobia does not pertain to negative *reactions* to sounds (as for hyperacusis, misophonia, and noise sensitivity), but rather the anticipatory *fear* that sound will be uncomfortable for any reason. Any of these sound tolerance conditions can cause a person to become phonophobic. People with phonophobia often do not want to venture outdoors because of the unpredictable nature of sounds in the outdoor environment. It would be common for a person with phonophobia to wear earplugs and/or earmuffs when outdoors (and indoors when away from the home).

"For office use only (II)" refers to Interviewer's Impressions as to whether/not the person has a sound toleranceproblem.

- **M** would be checked if Misophonia was suspected.
- **H** would be checked if Hyperacusis was suspected.
- **NS** would be checked if Noise Sensitivity was suspected.
- **P** would be checked if Phonophobia was suspected.
- If None of these conditions is suspected, then **N** would be checked.
- It is OK to check more than one condition—any condition that is suspected should be checked.

# What to Do When Everyday Sounds Are Too Loud (Not related to using hearing aids)

*Bill Smith is bothered by everyday sounds. (This problem is sometimes called **hyperacusis**.) Kitchen sounds and the vacuum cleaner are too loud for him. He is bothered by road noise when he drives. It seems like everything at church is too loud. What should Bill do? Believe it or not, being around more sound can make things **better!** And, staying away from sound can make his problem **worse!** What??? He should add **more** sound??? Keep reading and we'll explain...*

**There are three things you can do if everyday sounds are too loud for you.**

1. Keep yourself surrounded with sound that is comfortable for you.
2. Listen to sounds that you enjoy as often as you can.
3. Only wear hearing protection when you really need to.

## **1. Keep yourself surrounded with sound that is comfortable for you.**

**Why should I keep myself surrounded with sound?** Let's start by thinking about your eyes and how they adjust to light. Imagine sitting in a dark movie theater and then going outside into the daylight. Everything seems brighter to you than it does to people who were not sitting in the dark. Your eyes had adjusted to the dark and now they have to readjust to the daylight.

Your ears adjust to sound like your eyes adjust to light. If you stay away from sound, your ears will slowly adjust to the quiet. After a while, everyday sounds will seem louder and harder to tolerate. Avoiding sound will only make the problem worse.

If you keep yourself surrounded with sound, your ears will readjust. It will slowly become easier for you to tolerate everyday sounds. You should only use sounds that are comfortable for you. It usually takes at least a few weeks of being around sound for this change to happen.

**How do I keep myself surrounded with sound?** You can use any sound that is not annoying (the sound can be either neutral or pleasant). Here are some ideas:

- Listen to music at a comfortable level
- Listen to radio shows
- Play recordings of nature sounds
- Keep a fan running
- Use a tabletop water fountain

Another choice: Some people wear small instruments in their ears that make a "shhh" sound. These instruments are called *in-the-ear noise generators or maskers*. Your audiologist can tell you more about them.

## **2. Listen to sounds that you enjoy as often as you can.**

**Why should I listen to sounds that I enjoy as often as I can?** We just talked about the problem of everyday sounds being too loud (hyperacusis). Many people also have another problem. They just don't like certain sounds, but not because they are too loud. (This problem is sometimes called misophonia.) If you don't like certain sounds, you should make a point of listening to sounds that you enjoy. Spending time enjoying sound can help you get better at tolerating everyday sounds that you don't like.

## **3. Only wear hearing protection when you really need to.**

**Why should I use ear protection only when I really need to?** When everyday sounds seem too loud, some people start using ear protection all the time. Remember that avoiding sound will make the problem worse. Only use ear protection when sounds are dangerously loud or uncomfortably loud. As soon as the sound around you is at a safe and comfortable level, take the ear protection off. The goal is to wear ear protection *only when needed*.

Use earplugs or earmuffs only when:

- Sounds around you are uncomfortably loud
- You are around dangerously loud sounds like:
  - Lawn mowers
  - Loud concerts
  - Power tools
  - Guns
  - Etc.

## **Is there any research?**

Yes. In 2002 Formby, Sherlock, and Gold<sup>1</sup> studied *sound tolerance*.

- There were two groups of people:
  1. One group wore earplugs for two weeks
  2. The other group wore in-the-ear sound generators (maskers) that make a "shhh" sound
- After two weeks:
  - The people who wore earplugs could tolerate *less* sound than before
  - The people who wore sound generators could tolerate *more* sound than before
- This study showed that:
  - Adding sound makes it easier to tolerate sound
  - Staying in quiet makes it harder to tolerate sound

## **Bottom line**

If everyday sounds bother you:

- Surrounding yourself with comfortable sound will help
- Avoiding sound will make the problem worse

## **How long does it take?**

It can take weeks or months for your ears to adjust.

**Talk to your audiologist if you have any questions.**

<sup>1</sup>Formby C, Sherlock LP, Gold SL (2002). Adaptive calibration of chronic auditory gain: Interim findings. In R. Patuzzi (Ed.), Proceedings of the VIIth International Tinnitus Seminar (pp. 165-69). Crawley: University of Western Australia.

## SOOTHING SOUND ACTIVITY

Instructions:

1. Turn on a sound that you think will be soothing.
2. Adjust the volume until you find the level that is most soothing to you (not loud!).
3. While you listen to the sound, determine how soothing the sound is to you, even with tinnitus:
  - Not soothing at all
  - Slightly soothing
  - Moderately soothing
  - Very soothing
  - Extremely soothing
4. Try a variety of sounds that you think will be soothing.
5. What sound did you try?                                      How soothing was it for you?


Your Notes:

## **BACKGROUND SOUND ACTIVITY**

Instructions:

1. Turn on a background sound as you go about your daily activities.
2. Adjust the volume to a noticeable level for you, but not loud.
3. While listening to the sound, notice how much easier it is to focus on what you want when there is a background sound.
4. Make sure to try different sounds.
5. What sound did you try?    What did you notice?

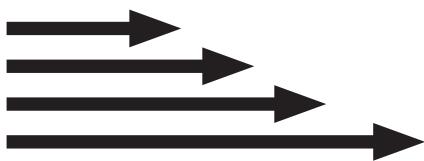

Your Notes:

# INTERESTING SOUND ACTIVITY

Instructions:

1. Listen to a sound that is interesting to you.
2. Adjust the volume at a comfortable level for you (not loud!).
3. Choose the percentage of attention focused on that interesting sound:

Attention focused on the interesting sound:



0 % of attention  
25% of attention  
50% of attention  
75% of attention  
100% of attention

4. What sound did you try?                                   What was percentage of attention on that sound?


5. Make sure you try different sounds that are interesting to you.

Your Notes:

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